GLIMPSES OF THE PROPHET'S LIFE

By

TALIP ALP

TEHRAN - IRAN

First edition 1969
Third revised edition 1976
Sixth edition 2000

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Translated and published by
World Organization for Islamic Services,
P. 0. Box 11365-1545,
Tehran - 15837,
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN.

In the Name of Allah,
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful

Praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all beings;
the Most Compassionate, the Merciful;
the Master of the Day of Judgement;
Thee only we serve, and to Thee alone we pray for succour;
Guide us in the straight path;
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,
who are immune from Thy wrath
and have never gone astray.

0' Allah send your blessings to the head of your messengers and the last of your prophets, Muhammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.
Also send your blessings to all your prophets and envoys.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
الحمد لله رب العالمين الرحمن الرحيم
مالك يوم الدين إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين
اهدنا الصراط المستقيم صراط الذين
أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم
ولا الضالين

اللهم صل على
سيد رسلك وخاتم أنبيائك
محمد وآله الطيبين الطاهرين
وصل على جميع الأنبياء والمرسلين

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Publication Secretary

World Organization for Islamic Services

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FOREWORD

We are proud to present in this booklet a topic that is so dear in every Muslim's heart. It is the life of our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny). It is needless to emphasise the importance of learning this sublime example and practical expression of the Islamic message. The Tradition of the Prophet is regarded as the model for all Muslims and defines the general features of a Muslim's life. The Prophet's attributes and qualities are supreme and an understanding of his personality requires very careful study of his contemporary conditions. However, we hope that this booklet will be stimulating for further readings of a more extensive nature.

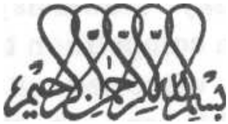
This wonderful article was written by our brother Talip Alp and was initially published by the Muslim Youth Association in the United Kingdom.

Since our first publication of 5,000 copies created such a great demand for the booklet, we have decided to reprint this booklet regularly.

We pray to the Almighty Allah for guidance and success in our work.

World Organization for Islamic Services
(WOFIS)
(Board of Writing, Translation and Publication)

Ist May 1976
Tehran - IRAN



In the name of Allah the Beneficent,
the Merciful

INTRODUCTION

"Ours is an age of scientific progress, an era of technological advancement, a century of ceaseless inventions. In this time of phenomenal material development man has attained a high standard of knowledge of natural sciences compared with what he knew about a century or so ago. Consequently the knowledge and experience he has gained over the last few decades have given him courage and confidance to the extent that made him undertake highly perilous and adventurous projects. He has successfully reached the bottom of oceans and climbed to the

heights of the sky. Now-a-days he is wildly engaged in a keen competition to land on other planets. Having witnessed all these achievements one might tend to think that man ought to be congratulated on his multiplicity of contributions to the world of civilisation in the field of science and technology. Unfortunately facts exist that prevent us from feeling very proud of belonging to the human race. The bitter experience acquired from the last two World Wars has led to disappointment and resentment. The initial optimism induced in the people's mind by the victories of man's intellect over the forces of nature abandoned its place, after the two catastrophes, to feelings of indignation and utter disgust. The crystal-clear evidence points to the fact that the monopoliser of knowledge turned out to be devoid of such human qualities as magnanimity, sense of justice and equity, care for humanity, in short all values that serve to distinguish men from beasts. Mistakes of

the past filled people's minds with distrust and added to their disunity and enmity. Under the prevailing circumstances the prospect of world peace, to be realistic, is not at hand, nor have we any reason to believe that those responsible for the present chaos and misery are in quest of world peace and happiness. On the contrary, all that the big powers of the world hanker after is supremacy over the rest of the world. Modern society is sick and bewildered. It should be noted that this is not the first time that man has stumbled into the same pitfall created by the absence of true guidance; one that takes into full consideration man's weaknesses as well as his virtues. No one in his right senses can suppose human intellect to be capable of formulating a way of life which, if followed strictly, would save him from falling into error.

Many present-day ideologies claim to have the goodwill and qualities that will lead man

to prosperity and happiness. However, in practice they have been seen to be insincere as well as incompetent to provide man with what they have promised him - rather than solving our problems they have added to them by creating a world torn by dissensions and social ailments." In our opinion the world is in desperate need of Islam - the religion of peace and submission to the Creator of the universe - the religion of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, upon all of whom be peace. Having witnessed the bankruptcy of all too many "isms" once again we feel the-urge to refer to the Last Prophet of Islam as the last hope for the salvation of us all.

In reply to a request of an old student seeking his advice al-Ghazali wrote: "My dear and beloved son, may Allah number you among His obedient servants and lead you along the path of His friends. Know that the source of the best of advices is the Messenger-

ship of the Prophet upon whom be the peace and blessings of Allah. If by now you have acquired some enlightenment out of this source what would you need my advice for? But if still you have not derived beneficial lessons from it then what did you earn and learn during all these years?" (1).

Al-Ghazali remarks on another occasion "If one considers the sayings of the Messenger of God (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) and what is related in the Tradition about his concern for showing to people the true way and his graciousness in leading men by various acts of sympathy and kindness to improve their character and conduct and to better their mutual relations - leading them, in fine, to what is the indispensable basis of all betterment, religious and secular alike - if one considers this, one comes to the necessary knowledge that his good will towards his people is greater than that of a father towards his child." (2)

The study of the life of the Prophet can never be overemphasized for only by a careful examination of his personality throughout a life-long struggle can one understand the spirit of the Divine Message with which he was entrusted. Says the Qur'an:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ
كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ
كَثِيرًا. (الأَحْزَابُ، ٢١)

"Verily in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much". (Quran, 33:21)

It also states:

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ

فَانْتَهُوا (الْحَشْر، ٧)

"...... And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take (accept) it, and whatsoever he forbids you, give it up". (Qur'an, 59:7)

Clearly, these two Quranic verses are sufficient to urge a Muslim to undertake a serious study of the Prophetic Traditions and behave accordingly.

Fortunately the way of life of God's Messenger, private and public, has been recorded in considerable detail. His followers went so far as to count the number of grey hairs in his beard and even write detailed descriptions of his shoes. The first written work (siyar) relating to the life of the Prophet is ascribed to `Urwah, who is said to have met some of the companions of the Prophet, and his student az-Zuhri. Some have ascribed the first written work to Ibn Is'haq who passed away

in Baghdad in the year 150 A.H. The oldest and most reliable of such books that have come down to us are those written by al-Waqidi (d.207 A.H.), Ibn Hisham (d.313 A.H.) and at-Tabari (d.315 A.H.) (3). A great deal of the sayings of the Prophet, however, started to be written during his lifetime (4) and were compiled after his passing away. It need hardly be stated that the "science of Tradition" is highly developed and the method of authentication is very impressive.

AGE OF DISENLIGHTENMENT

The meaning and importance of the Prophet's message can best be comprehended against the background of pre-Islamic Arabia. Historians refer to this period as the "era of ignorance" *(Jahiliyah).* Before the inception of Islam the Arabian peninsula was a scene of social disorder. Depending on their localities

its inhabitants had adopted various beliefs such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism etc. Idol-worshippers, however, constituted the majority. It is reckoned that twenty centuries before the advent of Islam, Prophet Ismael was sent to guide the tribes of Hijaz, Yemen and `Amaligah. During this long span of time, however, most of his teachings were obliterated.

Only the concept of Oneness of God had lived for a considerable time - six or seven centuries before the beginning of the Muslim Era, Hijrah. `Amr ibn Luwayy, the then Meccan chief brought an idol from Balga where he had been for medical treatment. Later on, some three hundred and sixty idols were made and erected in and around the Ka'bah. As time went by even idol-worshipping deteriorated to the extent that an idolator would eat his idol made of dates when he felt hungry and use the stones to clean himself in toilet. (5) This should serve as an unforgettable lesson

to the present generation and those to come as to how negligence and the absence of remembrance of God, and the authority emanating from His message led an otherwise capable nation to the depth of darkness.

Some of the Arab tribes regarded daughters as a nuisance and when they attained the age of five or six they would be buried alive. Some killed their children for fear of poverty.

In that lawless society morals had become very loose indeed. When a man died, his wife or wives were inherited by the nearest male relation. In this way one could take his step mother as his wife. There was no law pertaining to marriage or divorce. Hence a man could acquire as many wives as he wished and divorce them when he pleased. To divorce his wife it was sufficient for a man to say to her "you are to me as the back of my mother;"

but she would not be permitted to marry another man. Thus women used to be treated like articles of trade to be bought, sold or bartered away.

Slaves, female and male alike, were the victims of that cruel society which held unlimited power over their life and death.

Gambling, drunkenness and fornication, cruelty and plunder were objects of pride for the Arabs. Such was their daily life.

The pre-Islamic Arabs led a tribal life. The concept of nationhood or government was foreign to them. Inter-tribal relations were worse than could be imagined. In the fifty years before Islam one hundred and thirty two battles took place between the tribes. This warlike character of the Arabs is reflected in their ancient poetry. One Arab poet wrote:

"If an enemy tribe we do not find,
We go to war with a related or friend tribe,
And our war-lust is thus quenched." (6)

Arabs were not people of letters. "Even in a large town like Mecca, where commerce flourished and traders required to consign to writing a memorandum of their transactions on credit, there were no more than fifteen or twenty persons who knew to read and write... al-Baladhuri even names these seventeen individuals". (7)

Despite all that has been said so far and the scores of other shortcomings which the pre-Islamic Arabs had, they also possessed cer tain admirable qualities. They were outspoken, hospitable, generous, brave, and never yielding to their enemies. However in the absence of sound instructions even the best of qualities are bound to be misused.

But was this social decadance peculiar to the Arabs alone? Certainly not. Their contemporaries might have led a more luxurious and civilised life but were in, more or less, the same state otherwise. Thus ignorance had brought mankind to the brink of destruction from which only something miraculous could save them.

THE MESSENGER

When mankind was so deeply engrossed in futile and harmful practices, Allah most high out of His endless mercy raised a Prophet from among them to purify them and restore their lost dignity. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.), the posthumous son of `Abdullah, the youngest son of `Abd al-Muttalib, a most important leader of Mecca, and Aminah, daughter of Wahab, son of `Abd Manaf, son of Zuhrah, the chief of Banu Zuhrah, was born, according

to the majority, on 12th Rabi` al-Awwal, (probably 22nd April) 571 A.D.* The name "Muhammad" (meaning "The praised one") was given to him by his grandfather `Abd al-Muttalib. When questioned about his choice of this uncommon name the latter replied. "I desire that he may be praised in the heavens for the sake of God and in the earth for the sake of His creatures." A week or two after his birth, Muhammad (p.bx.h.a.h.p.) was given in charge of a wet-nurse called Halimah, from Banu Sa'd, as this was the custom of the nobility of Mecca. Halimah nursed Muhammad (p.bx.h.a.h.p.) for five years, who in return honoured and showed deep affection towards her and her family, throughout his life. It is related that once there was a year of famine and Halimah paid a visit to him. He gave her a camel burdened with goods and

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*According to the majority of Shi'ah historians, the Prophet's birthday was on 17th Rabi` al-Awwal.

forty sheep.

Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) was about six years old when his mother died. From then onward he was brought up by his grandfather `Abd al-Muttalib, an affectionate old man. And upon the death of `Abd al-Muttalib two years later the guardianship of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) passed to Abu T~lib a kind and generous uncle.

Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) was liked and respected by all since his youth for his noble character, charming manners and exceptional qualities; and his relations with the people earned him the appellations *"al-Amin "* and *"as-sadiq "* meaning the "trustworthy" and the "truthful" respectively. `Abdullah ibn Abi al-Hamsa° reports that long before Muhammad proclaimed his mission he had some transaction with him. The transaction was not completed when the former left Muhammad, promising

to be back. `Abdullah forgot about the affair completely. "Three days later," says `Abdullah "when I was walking past the place I found him still waiting for me. He was not annoyed with me at all for my carelessness. All that he said was: `you put me to the trouble of waiting here for three days'."

Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) was about twenty-three years old when the four leading families of the Quraysh undertook the recon struction of the Ka'bah, the sacred House of God, after its walls were damaged by flood. All went well until the stage was reached when the sacred black stone had to be installed in its proper place. The four, unable to share the honour of placing the stone, were soon at each other's throats. The argument had gone so far that Mecca seemed to be at the brink of a civil war. Observing the serious situation AN Umayyah ibn al-Mughirah al-Makhzum suggested that the first person entering *Bab as*-

Safa be made arbitrator. And when they saw Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) entering there was a unanimous agreement to abide by the judgment of the "Trustworthy". Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) ended the quarrel quite simply: He placed the Black Stone in the centre of a piece of **cloth spread out and let the chief of each tribe** hold one corner of this cloth. On Muhammad's (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) order the chiefs raised the cloth up to the required height; he then fixed the stone in the appropriate position. He thus prevented what seemed to be an inevitable war. But some forty more years had to elapse before he made the Arabs bury the hatchet which they so often used to chop each other's head.

At the age of twenty-five he married Khadijah, daughter of Khuwaylid ibn Asad ibn `Abd al-`Uzza ibn Qusayy. She was forty then and had been married twice before. Khadijah ranked high among the women of Quraysh. She was kindhearted, elegant, noble and attractive.

And having inherited considerable property from her second husband, she was wealthy. But above all she was renowned as *"at-Tahirah"* (meaning "the pure"). Although a number of celebrities from the Quraysh had expressed the desire to marry her, they all met with refusal. Therefore Muhammad's (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) marriage with Khadijah was to be regarded as another feather in his cap. Khadijah never ceased to be an ideal wife till she breathed her last. And Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) always remembered her after her passing away with sorrow and deep affection.

At the age of forty he began to receive the Divine Revelation. Muhammad (p.b.uh.-a.h.p.) who, was thus assigned to convey God's Message to people began to preach the "new faith" quietly and patiently to whoever would be likely to accept. In the first three years forty people embraced Islam. When the Message was proclaimed publicly it met with

fierce opposition. The Meccans did not fail to discern the fact that the new religion aimed at a complete reformation of the society, to which they would not subscribe. Disbelievers began to think of ways and means to render the call to Islam ineffective. They fast tried to bribe the Prophet by offering him wealth and leadership; they were refused. They threatened and attempted to kill him, yet they did not succeed. They called him a madman. But in the very depth of their hearts they admired him and admitted the fact that they were unfair to him.. So when Caesar, the Roman emperor questioned the Meccan chief Abu Sufyan, who at the time was a deadly opponent of the Prophet, regarding Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) the former replied: "Muhammad, the son of `Abdullah, is nobly born. His followers are on the increase. He is honest and truthful, has never told a falsehood, nor ever broken a pledge. He enjoins the people to worship one God and pray to no other deity. He preaches

kindness, piety and tolerance towards all." (8)

"Why then" one might ask "did the Meccans not follow the Prophet but instead fought him?" The answer to this is quite evident. The Message of Islam was aiming at changing the course of their lives, transforming their personalities, remoulding their manners and behaviour. Above all the new faith demanded that they should abandon their idols, which they held to be sacred. Besides, the boastful Arabs, who regarded the rest of mankind as " `ajam", inferior to them, could not simply swallow the concepts of "equality of men", "social justice", "human rights" etc. while Islam preached that man's superiority was not to be judged by race, rank, ancestry or the number of camels and slaves one possessed. Righteousness alone was to count.

As Islam continued to spread, the anger and anxiety of the Meccans grew too. They

threatened the Prophet with dire consequences if he did not put an end to his preaching. This did not carry any weight with the Prophet. But the cruelty of the disbelievers to the Muslims was now beyond endurance. It was then that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) advised some of his companions to migrate to Abyssinia. The lesson to be derived from this departure of the Muslims from their motherland to a totally foreign country is important. This incident indicates the degree of their faith in Islam and the extent to which they would go in their sacrifice for their religion. Life in Mecca was miserable, hard and cruel to Muslims. Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas relates that on an occasion out of acute hunger he was forced to wash and eat a piece of dry camel skin which he discovered while passing water.

Believers were molested, tortured, killed; some fled abroad but the struggle continued. No one gave in.

When all methods failed the eminent personalities of Quraysh gathered together in the hope that they would convince Muhammad (p.b.h.a.h.p.). Their spokesman `Utbah spoke to him in the Ka'bah ".......... If you have created this upheaval because you want wealth and riches, say so, and we shall make you the richest man in the land. If you want power and authority tell us and we shall make you our ruler ...." Muhammad (p.b.h.a.h.p.) replied "I want no wealth nor riches. I have no desire to be crowned a king .... I am a humble -servant of God. He has sent me to you as His Apostle. He has revealed to me His Book and He has commanded that I warn you against His wrath if you reject Him, and to bring you a promise of His blessings, if you believe. So I have given you His Message and no power on earth will stop me from propagating it.........." These words uttered by the Prophet in a way forecast the future success of Islam in the definite statement "........and no

power on earth will stop me from propagating it........" The remarkable thing is the fact that when these words were uttered the whole Muslim population was negligible in comparison with that of disbelievers. The Prophet's words much angered Quraysh who decided to boycott the Muslims. Accordingly no one in Mecca would be allowed to do business with the Prophet, his family or his :followers, sell food to them, pay a visit or even. talk to them. Thus the Messenger and his followers were compelled to abandon Mecca and settle in a nearby valley. Nevertheless the Prophet continued to go to the Ka'bah and to pray publicly. And whenever he had the opportunity he preached to strangers visiting Mecca for business or pilgrimage. Muslims lived in misery and utter discomfort for more than two long years feeding practically on grass for scarcity of food until some relenting Meccans lifted the ban. Shortly after this the Prophet lost his wife and his uncle Abu Talib who had

been of great help to him. The Prophet went on striving hard for the dissemination of the Message. One day, accompanied by Zayd, he walked up the rugged mountains to the city of Td'if, some fifty miles away from Mecca. Overcome by fanaticism and ignorance the people of this town brutally attacked and stoned the Prophet who had come to deliver them from darkness to light. As Ghulam Sarwar puts it: "If there was any just occasion for any man to curse his enemies, it was now for Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) to do so with regard to the people of Ta'if. He was bleeding, and his heart was almost broken at the cruel treatment he has so unjustly received. He might have said, `O God! destroy these people who are so wicked and not one of them has any sense of fairness.' He did nothing of the kind." (9) Instead of condemning and complaining about his enemies he sought refuge in God in humility of heart and utmost sincerity.

In the eleventh year of Prophethood a happy incident took place. Six pilgrims from the city of Yathrib, later named *Madinat an Nabi*, became Muslims and swore allegience to Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.). These new converts spread Islam in Medina in quite fast so that in the following year a group of 72 Yathribite Muslims presented themselves to the Prophet and secretly pledged themselves and their people "to stand by him as they would stand by their own children."

Intensified persecution of the Muslims by Quraysh made it impossible for the former to dwell in Mecca any longer. In this difficult period the Prophet was divinely ordained to leave Mecca. He left for Medina shortly before the Quraysh broke into his house intending to kill him.

THE MESSENGER IN MEDINA

The migratory journey of the Prophet to Medina in the year 622 A.D. marks the beginning of a new era. "Hijrah" as this migration is referred to is regarded as a turning point in the Muslim history.

After the warm welcome accorded to him by the people of Medina the Prophet set to work to establish a city state in Medina. He called for consultation all the inhabitants of the place, Meccan immigrants, Medinite con-

verts, Jews and the Arabs who had not yet embraced Islam and promulgated a state constitution. This is the first written constitution of any state in the history of the world. It contains details of the rights and duties of both the ruler and the ruled .... (10)

"In the second year of Hijrah the Prophet initiated mobile defense." (11) As it can be seen from these two examples "organising the community" was one of the first activities of the Prophet in Medina. Muslims thus began to live a disciplined life and were kept on the alert.

THE BATTLE OF BADR

It must be borned in mind that the migration of Muslims to Medina was a forced flight, hence a state of belligerency existed from the very outset between the Muslims and

the Meccan disbelievers. That the two communities had to clash sooner or later was anybody's guess - But when? A very rich Meccan caravan carrying goods worth 50,000 dinars - under Abu Sufyan was on its way from Syria and heading towards Mecca. And once they strengthened their economic situation Quraysh were most likely to launch a massive attack on Medina, where, with the help of jews rebelling against the Prophet they could exterminate the Muslims totally. There had already been a number of incidents that had added to the ever-existing tension. Under the circumstances the condition of the Muslims was rather precarious. Noticing the seriousness of the situation the Prophet sent out Talhah ibn `Ubaydallah and Said ibn Zayd to al-Hawra' for reconnaissance. The two emissaries hurried to Medina when Abu Sufyan's caravan drew near. Abu Sufyan a cunning man leaving the caravan behind went to Badr in person where he soon found out that the place

had been visited by men from Medina and was quick at dispatching a man to Mecca for help. It must have seemed natural and easy for the Muslims to intercept the caravan in question, which if allowed to reach its destination, would strengthen the armed forces of Quraysh considerably. Further, an attempt to seize the caravan would force Quraysh to fight an untimely war.

When the news reached Mecca Abu Jahl, an influential leader, summoned the people to the Ka'bah and instructed them to get ready for the march. When the Quraysh army left Mecca it consisted of about 1000 soldiers, 700 of whom rode camels and the rest were on horse back. They were fully armed with all the fashionable weapons of the time. Meanwhile Abu Sufyan managed to change his route and thus escape from the Muslims. The crisis should have ended when this new development was conveyed to Abu Jahl, who refused to

retreat. Instead, he insisted on making a display of strength to demoralize the Muslims. He marched on until finally he encamped his forces on one side of the valley of Badr, six marches from Medina.

Muslims, under the command of the Prophet, however, formed quite a contrast when compared to their enemies. To start with they were not more than about 300 men poorly clad and ill equipped. Only a few had armour and the rest just a sword. They possessed two horses and seventy camels each of which had to carry three men. But most serious of all, they were outnumbered by three to one. Evidently this small band of Muslims was neither prepared nor had the intention to fight an army like that of the Quraysh at that stage; everyone had Abu Sufyan's caravan in mind, and excepting the Prophet, none had taken into consideration the possibility of facing the whole population of armed Quraysh

in the battlefield so unexpectedly. It was a big surprise, therefore, for the Muslims, to hear of Abu Jahl's army on their arrival in the valley of Dhahran. To deal with this new situation, the Prophet returned to his starting point, nearby Medina, where he could consult his companions. A section of the companions stated that they were with him for fighting. After some moments of silence and hesitation, however, there was a unanimous agreement to fight. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) ordered: "March on and be glad that God has promised me one of two parties". (that is either Abu Sufyan's caravan or victory over Abu Jahl's army). A day later, however, the Muslims discovered that the caravan was out of reach.

The two armies clashed on Friday, 17th Ramadan in the second year of Hijrah. (probably 14th January 624 A.D.) After arranging the Muslims in battle lines the Prophet turned towards the Ka'bah in supplication. He ended

his prayers in the following words:

> "O God! these Quraysh have come with their friends to belie thy messenger. O' God! we need thy help which thou hast promised. O God! should this small band of ours perish, there would be none left to worship thee." (12)

Quraysh started the fight when Shaybah and `Utbah sons of Rabi ah, and Walid, `Utbah's son, advanced to challenge the Muslims to single combat. On the Prophet's order Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle, `Ubaydah son of Harith and `Ali son of Abu Talib met the three men respectively. Hamzah and `Ali soon killed their opponents, while `Ubaydah was wounded by `Utbah who met his end soon with 'Ali's sword. After this victory of the Muslim combatants a raging battle ensued. The Muslims fought with unprecendented spirit and valour. In the end the infidels were utterly routed

leaving behind seventy dead and seventy prisoners. Among those slain were eleven of the fourteen Meccans chieftains who had conspired to kill the Prophet shortly before he left Mecca. Their death dealt a severe blow to the Quraysh leadership. As to the Muslims; their losses were fourteen dead in all. But they had been instrumental in winning the most important victory in their history. This was a divine victory as God said in the Qur'an:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ.

(الأنفال، ١٧)

"You (Muslims) slew them not, but Allah slew them". (Qur*an,* 8:17)

The Prophet was merciful and compassionate not only to Muslims but also to his enemies. The treatment accorded to the pris oners of Badr amply confirms this fact. The

prisoners were fed while some of the Muslims remained hungry, "an act of benevolance which hardly finds any parallel in the history of mankind." The ransom fixed for the prisoners was that those who knew to read and write should each teach ten Muslim boys the art. (13)

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

Although the battle of Badr had resulted in a victory for the Muslims no peace or a treaty of any kind was concluded between the Meccans and the Muslims. Not only the state of belligerency between the two communities continued to prevail, but also preparations by Quraysh for a war of greater dimensions were to commence soon. `Ikrimah the son of Abu Jahl, who was killed in the battle of Badr, and many other chiefs of the Quraysh paid a visit to Abu Sufyan and proposed to

take revenge from the Muslims if only he were to meet the cost of the expedition. Abu Sufyan agreed. Accordingly the entire profits of Abu Sufyan's caravan were spent in preparation for the coming war. The clans of Kinanah and Tahamah also joined Quraysh against Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.). At the same time much intrigue and sedition were being concocted with the Medinite Jews. The Prophet, however, was not oblivious of the circumstances. He too, through covenants brought all the coastal tribes of Arabia into alliance. This severed the easy access of the Quraysh to Syria and Medina, and forced them to open commerce with `Iraq. In the meantime a rich Meccan caravan on its way to `Iraq was intercepted by Zayd ibn Harith with one hundred riders from Medina and a big booty acquired.

By the month of Shawwal (January) in the third year of Hijrah Quraysh had completed their preparation for war. Their forces

consisted of 3000 soldiers (700 of whom wore mail armour) 3000 camels, 200 horses.

Shortly, before the Meccan Army set forth, `Abbas, the Prophet's uncle and his only sympathiser among the Meccans sent him a letter with a man from the tribe of Ghifar to inform him about the Meccan's plan to invade Medina. Upon this the Prophet warned the people to withdraw their animals 'from the outskirts of Medina and dispatched, his own men to investigate the authenticity of the news. Alarming as it was the news was confirmed. The next thing to be heard was that the Meccan army reached Uhud; about three miles northeast of Medina.

The question of "how to confront the enemy" was debated. The Prophet was of the opinion that if Medina be fortified and defend ed against Quraysh, it could prove easier to repel the enemy from there. Leaders of the

Jews as well as *Muhajirun* (immigrants) and *Ansar* (helpers) were of the same opinion. But the rest who constituted the majority had a different opinion. These were mainly young Muslims who wanted to fight the enemy in the open. The Prophet agreed to the majority's decision.

After the Friday congregational prayers, Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) gave the glad news of the victory to those who were persevering and ordered the army to march.

But they were not far from Medina when `Abdullah ibn Ubayy and his 300 jewish comrades betrayed the Muslims. Ibn Ubayy left the Muslims after making the flimsy excuse that the Prophet had not taken his advice but was following "boys". Thus when the Muslims arrived at Uhud only 700 men were left with the Prophet. Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) positioned his troops at the foot

of Mount Uhud so that the mountain remained at their back. He lined up his forces in battle array and posted `Abdullah ibn Jubayr with fifty archers to guard the rear of the Muslim army against a possible onslaught of the enemy from that direction. The Prophet sternly warned the archers thus: "Guard our rear for we fear that they may attack us from that side, and remain in your positions and do not move therefrom. Even if you see us defeating the enemy and entering his camp, do not depart from your positions. And if you see us being killed do not come to our help to defend us. And it is for you to shoot their horses, for the horses cannot win against arrows." (14)

Quraysh were the first to start the fight. Following this Zubayr led an attack on the right wing of the Quraysh army and outmaneuvered them. Then Hamzah, `Ali and Abu Dujanah with lightning speed made a shattering dash into the ranks of the enemy. Under

the irresistable onslaught of the three, the enemy became demoralised and began to be scattered in confusion. The Muslims who at the start gained the upper hand and controlled the strategy of the battle overwhelmed their foes in all directions. To most Muslims the battle seemed to be over, the enemy was retreating in disorder; Victory was theirs! It was at this crucial stage that the Muslims committed a most serious mistake; taking victory for granted they fell upon the spoils. Most of the archers too, observing the scene from the mountain pass thought that the fight was over and despite the Prophet's clear instructions and stern warning not to abandon their positions at all costs and events went to join in securing the booty. The Muslims paid for this second mistake very dearly. A cavalry division of the enemy under- the command of Khalid ibn Walid noticing the departure of the archers lost no time in launching an attack from the very position the archers were sup-

posed to guard and inflicted heavy casualties on the Muslims. What contributed most to the chaos among the Muslims however was perhaps the false news that the Prophet had been killed. Shocked by this news some of the Muslims fled in panic. But the rest fought with unequalled courage and determination. Especially the bravery of the many martyrs who laid down their lives in defending the person of the Prophet would move one to tears and ecstasy. Whatever the mistakes and the losses of the Muslims on the day of Uhud these should not mask the fact that Muslims who rallied round the Prophet fought the enemies with perseverance until the latter retired from the battle field.

The events of Uhud, however provided the Muslims with a precious moral victory. Referring to what happened in Uhud says the Qur'an:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ اِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ
اَفَائِنْ مَاتَ اَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلٰى اَعْقَابِكُمْ .
(آلُ عِمْرانْ ، ۱۴۴)

"And Muhammad is but a Messenger, surely *(many)* messengers have gone before him; if then he dies or is killed, will you turn upon your heels?". *(Qur'an, 3:144)*

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهُ اِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُمْ بِاِذْنِه
حَتّٰى اِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْاَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اَرٰيكُمْ مَا تُحِبُّونَ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ
الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الْاٰخِرَةَ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ

عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو
فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. (آل عمران، ١٥٢)

"And most certainly Allah made good His promise to you, when you blasted them by His leave, until when you flinched and disputed about the command, and you disobeyed, after He had shown you what you had loved (victory); of you were some who desired this world (booty) and of you were some who desired the next world; then He turned you away from them, that He may try you; and He pardoned you; and Allah is bounteous to the believers". (Qur'an, 3:152)

THE JEWS

The Prophet had concluded peace with several Jewish tribes residing in Medina! Of

these Banu Qaynuqa' violated their side of the treaty by committing hostile acts against the Muslims openly. Not long after the battle of Badr an event took place which taxed the patience of the Muslims. A Muslim woman was insulted by some men of Banu Qaynuqa'. A Muslim man passing by the scene had to interfere. In the fight that ensued he killed the offender, the Muslim man too was killed. This worsened the relation between the Muslims and Banu Qaynuqa'. The Prophet requested Banu Qaynuqa' to respect the agreement and refrain from harming the Muslims. But the Jews would not listen. They grew arrogant and said: "O, Muhammad! Let not the victory over a people who did not know the science of war deceive you. By God, if you fight us, you shall know that we are men." Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.) was left with no alternative; he laid siege to the quarters of Banu Qaynuqa'. After fifteen days the Jews surrendered. With the intercession of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy and

few others the Prophet let the Jews emigrate leaving their arms behind. They left Medina for Wadi-l-Qura, north Arabia, Syria, and other places.

Banu an-Nadir was the other Jewish clan which lived in Medina. They too were bitter enemies of the Muslims. In the fourth year of Muslim Era they plotted to kill the Prophet. Upon this treason they were asked to leave the city. They refused to do so. They were however defeated in a skirmish that took place and promptly deported. While some repaired to Syria others established a state of their own at Khaybar. After a while, the Jews of Khaybar established diplomatic ties with the Meccans against Muhammad (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.). At the same time they concluded agreement with all the tribes of Arabia against the Muslims. Thus in a few days they succeeded in rallying some 10,000 men under the banner of the Quraysh and leadership of Abu Sufyan to

invade Medina. The Jewish intrigues continued until Khaybar was conquered by the Muslims and the Jews routed completely in the seventh year of the Hijrah. The siege of Medina lasted for two weeks and ended in a complete fiasco. The enemy tried in vain to overcome the trenches* and barricades surrounding the city - The trenches that were dug by the Muslims constituted a new technique not known to the Arabs before. And the enemy was taken by surprise. Then a severe wind blew which was followed by a dust storm pulling down the enemy's tents. This confused and demoralised the tribes who began to argue among themselves and ultimately left Medina.

In the sixth year of Hijrah a ten-year truce was concluded with the Quraysh, at Hudaybiyah. Then the Meccans violated the

* "On the advice of Salman al-Farsi, the Prophet ordered trenches to be dug round Medina and filled with fire".

treaty by attacking the Khuza'ah tribe which was an ally of the Muslims. The Prophet decided to march on Mecca. In the eighth year of Hijrah Mecca was conquered peacefully. The Prophet asked the Meccans: "What do you think I will do to you?" They answered: "you are a generous brother and the son of a generous brother': (12) Muhammad (p.b.u.h. a.h.p.) pardoned his bitterest enemies, those who for years had tormented, tortured and killed Muslims, finally turning them out of their own hearth and homes, then rot allowing them to rest even in Medina. Despite all these he granted them all, except a few hardened criminals, general amnesty. He was indeed in words and deeds "a mercy to mankind". Old tribal and personal enmities were replaced by an unprecedented peace, tranquility, feeling of unity and fraternity.

The old warring Arabs who knew no nationhood in all their history become united

for the first time by the bond of "Islamic brotherhood".

This had not been easy to achieve. It took twenty-three years of ceaseless striving and sacrifices to see the success of the Prophet's mission (p.b.u.h.a.h.p.)

THE END